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RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001088

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: REGIME HOLD GAMBARI IN NAY PYI TAW

REF: RANGOON 1084

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Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: UN Special Envoy Gambari arrived in Rangoon November 3 and proceeded straight to Nay Pyi Taw where he was granted meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Relations (liaison with Aung San Suu Kyi). A UN official told us Gambari described his meeting with the Foreign Minister as disappointing but was pleased and hopeful after meeting Aung Kyi. Two separate sources confirmed rumored military reshuffles among the regional commanders, and another peaceful protest of monks reportedly occurred in the city of Mogok. Another 46 activists have been released from detention, including 18 NLD members. End summary.

Gambari Winging It in Nay Pyi Taw

¶2. (C) After Gambari's arrival in Burma on the evening of November 3, UN Resident Coordinator Charles Petrie met with him for one hour at Rangoon International Airport before Gambari proceeded to Nay Pyi Taw accompanied by one assistant and one security officer. Petrie told the Charge d'Affaires that Gambari had three objectives for this visit: 1) ensure tangible change in the ability of Aung San Suu Kyi to engage in the political dialogue, i.e. with greater access to more people; 2) gain access for ICRC to the prisons or the release of political prisoners; 3) gain access for UN Human Rights Rapporteur Pinheiro before the November 21 ASEAN Summit. Petrie also stated that Gambari would try to take control of his schedule to see those he wanted to see and to stay as long as possible. Except for a meeting with the Foreign Minister, Petrie had no additional information on what Gambari's schedule would be.

¶3. (C) Petrie did not expect Gambari to spend much time on Petrie's personal situation (reftel), beyond citing it as symptomatic of the UN's difficulties engaging in dialogue with the regime. For that reason, Gambari would seek stronger UN representation, including a representative of

Gambari to be assigned to Rangoon.

¶4. (C) UN Officials told us November 5 that Gambari had mixed results from his meetings in Nay Pyi Taw. They characterized Gambari's meeting with Minister of Relations Aung Kyi as "quite good" and said that Gambari felt optimistic about the dialogue process as a result. However, Gambari was disappointed that, despite his request for a substantive meeting with Foreign Minister Nyan Win, the meeting had strictly focused on protocol. Although the UN issued a press release on November 4 that stated Gambari was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Thein Sein and other senior members of the government, as well as Aung San Suu Kyi and "other interlocutors," UN officials told us that Gambari did not know with whom he would be meeting on November 5. Petrie traveled to Nay Pyi Taw for consultations with Gambari on November 5, but UN officials did not know when Gambari planned to return to Rangoon.

More News of a Military Reshuffle

¶5. (C) A separate, reliable source confirmed to us that a military reshuffle had occurred as reported in reftel. The source said that Than Shwe had created a new Bureau Special Operations 6 to oversee the Nay Pyi Taw command, to which he promoted the Central Commander MAJ GEN Khin Zaw to head up. Khin Zaw is reportedly close to Than Shwe. Likewise, MAJ GEN Thar Aye, the former North West commander promoted to head Bureau of Special Operations 4, is also close to Than Shwe and reportedly a tough, cold-blooded commander.

The Indians' Take

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¶6. (C) In a meeting with pol/econ chief, Indian Commercial Counselor Srinivas Prasad acknowledged the Indians had received the same information from their sources regarding the reshuffle and cautioned against reading too much into the moves. The top generals are a tight bunch, Prasad emphasized, and they are sticking together. We should not expect to see Maung Aye move against Than Shwe or Shwe Mann move against Maung Aye. They all understand that they stand together and will fall together.

¶7. (C) Prasad believed that Than Shwe and Maung Aye were watching and grooming four officers in particular, all known for their efficiency and their ability to carry out orders from above. These four were Secretary 1 LT GEN Tin Aung Myint Oo, Chief of Air Defenses MAJ GEN Myint Hlaing, new Chief of Bureau of Special Operations 4 MAJ GEN Thar Aye, and former Central Commander MAJ GEN Khin Zaw. Prasad stated that Khin Zaw was being promoted for his firm control of Mandalay, especially during the recent protests in September.

Khin Zaw had managed to control the monks in Mandalay without damaging pictures of violence leaking to the press, and he prevented demonstrations in Mandalay from reaching a critical mass as had happened in Rangoon.

¶8. (C) Prasad also said that the ethnic cease-fire groups were unhappy with the participants the regime chose to represent their groups on the Constitution Drafting Committee. The cease-fire groups remain determined not to disarm; Prasad added the Wa have outright refused. Still to be addressed are the groups' demands for autonomy and control over their natural resources. Prasad recommended that should Aung San Suu Kyi be given the chance to speak out, she should state that any government she backed would grant the ethnic cease-fire groups limited autonomy in a federalist system. Such a move could potentially split the cease-fire groups from the regime and win their backing.

More Protests, Releases

¶19. (U) There was reportedly another peaceful demonstration by 50 monks in Mogok (Mandalay Division) on November 4, although we have been unable to track down any eyewitnesses to verify the report or obtain more details because power lines to Mogok have been cut. The regime also reportedly released another 46 detainees on November 1, 18 of whom were members of the National League for Democracy Party.

Comment

¶110. (C) The regime appears determined to set the terms of its discussions with the UN. Gambari's positive first meeting with Aung Kyi validates other opinions of him we have received. However, Aung Kyi may only be the nice face of the regime shown to just string the process along while the trusted generals try to strengthen their political control in the background. The objectives laid out by Gambari provide us with benchmarks to judge whether Aung Kyi is anything more than a nice face. The tight control over Gambari at the outset does not give us much confidence that restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi will be eased. End comment.

VILLAROSA